Section 3: Cross-Goal Strategies

Introduction

Region 8 manages several cross-goal programs that are the important means by which all regional goals and objectives are met. They serve the Region by providing support needed to make decisions regarding science, information management, technology, resources and the deployment of these tools to carry out our mission. Each regional goal uses science, information, technology, staffing and dollars as a means to accomplish current and future program goals.

This section highlights a few of these cross-cutting strategies: human capital, information, science and environmental management systems and homeland security. Through these strategies, Region 8 will provide critical support capabilities that will: 1) enhance partnering; 2) provide and maintain new technological changes and systems; 3) help acquire and retain needed skills and knowledge; 4) help manage a growing volume of data; 5) ensure the effective and efficient management of our budget; and 6) reduce EPA Region 8's impact on the environment.

Human Capital

Region 8 will implement several human capital projects that will support the Agency's goals. We will measure our performance and communicate how our results contribute to the Agency's goals and objectives. We will also ensure that continuous improvements are undertaken.

Region 8 has a strong focus on the recruitment, retention and development of our staff. We are proud to have been recently selected by the Partnership for Public Service as the "4th Best Place to Work in the Federal Government." The programs that we have put in place to get us there are the areas of focus for our Human Capital Strategic Plan.

Region 8 plans to formalize the Regional Human Capital Strategic Plan. The plan will document short and long range efforts in accomplishing each of the five Human Capital goals outlined in the Agency's Strategic Plan.

We will continue to utilize tools such as 360 degree feedback to supervisors, along with facilitated feedback meetings and coaching and/or an update of our Employee Survey. To make certain that we are most effective at our mission, we must continue to seek feedback on our effectiveness, and adjust our organizational behavior as needed. Feedback is critical in any organizational system to ensure that management is "keeping its ear to the ground", and making those necessary shifts to perform at an optimal level. To help our managers continue their development and to maximize their effectiveness, we will provide coaching services.

With retirements and other transitions continuing, EPA Region 8 senior managers will assess vacant positions and organizational structures to ensure they support the Agency's strategic goals. We will continue our development of managers and staff to take on new and more challenging assignments. Region 8 will continue our strong leadership development program, to prepare for

succession, and to encourage leadership qualities so that every employee performs to their highest potential and routinely practices teamwork and collaboration. We will continue to plan for management and technical staff transitions through creative efforts such as backfilling vacancies of known retirees in advance to allow for intensive training, developmental details, rotational assignments and use of intern programs to ensure the employees have the competencies needed now and in the future.

Region 8 expects our efforts over the past year to develop a recruitment strategy will yield results during this year, and have established a followup effort to address retention issues. Each ARA/Office Director must submit a plan for the fiscal year beginning in FY04, describing what specific activities will be undertaken to increase diversity in Region 8 and report on specific accomplishments.

Success will be measured through the indicators in our feedback sources: 360 degree feedback for supervisors, employee surveys, developmental opportunities and increased diversity in both the general workforce and management positions.

Information Management

The Region 8 Information Management program has four key strategies to leverage environmental and administrative information to achieve the EPA Region 8 mission:
1. Maintain fast reliable IT infrastructure and communications
2. Deliver integrated administrative systems and environmental data to desktops
3. Maintain data partnerships with states and tribes to assure high quality data
4. Provide public access to environmental information.

Region 8 has made great strides in maintaining a fast, reliable computer Local Area Network (LAN) and desktop PCS that provide email, internet, office software and more. We will ensure continued improvements in FY04 through additional upgrades or replacements in hardware and software, acquiring more secure means for full-feature remote access, expanding our Storage Area network (SAN) capacity and researching emerging technologies.

Region 8 will continue to deliver integrated administrative systems and environmental data to employee desktops to maintain employee access to systems and data needed to carry out their work. We will identify hardware and software requirements for electronic records and document management in support of establishing a centralized regional records center. We will deploy automated scheduling for Region 8 Conference Center and implement EPA's new electronic Correspondence Management System (CMS). We will deliver Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to the desktop, and conduct outreach to programs to utilize GIS and deploy E-Docket. Focus will continue to be placed on improving Continuity of Operations and Emergency Response data access by deploying a Region 8 "situation room" in the new Regional Response Center (RRC).

Region 8 will maintain data partnerships with states and tribes to assure high quality data are

available. We will support the continued use of the National Environmental Information Exchange Network (NEIEN) grant program. Additional baseline visits for Region 8 states and tribes will be conducted in FY04. Our goal for FY04 is to encourage grant applicants to consider various data flows including: Air Quality System (AQS); Facility Registry System (FRS); National Emissions Inventory (NEI); Resource Conservation and Recovery Act Information System (RCRAInfo); Safe Drinking Water Information System (SDWIS); and Toxics Release Inventory System (TRIS). Our goal for FY05 will focus on Integrated Compliance Information System - National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (ICIS-NPDES); and Storage and Retrieval for Water Quality Data (STORET).   Our performance measure will be the successful exchange of data on the Exchange Network. The states and tribes will then develop and sign a Trading Partnership Agreement (TPA) with the Region.

   Region 8 will provide public access to environmental information through continued use of our Environmental Information Service Center (EISC) and Technical Library and our website.

Science

Regional Science Coordination and Oversight
   EPA Region 8's Regional Science Liaison (RSL) provides input into EPA's Office of Research and Development (ORD) plans on high-priority, cross-regional research needs. The RSL also communicates science to the Region, states and tribes from research results obtained from programs such as the Regional Applied Research Effort (RARE), Regional Methods Initiative (RM), Science to Achieve Results (STAR) and Small Business Innovative Research (SBIR). The Regional Applied Research Effort and Regional Methods Initiative are two mechanisms used by ORD to respond to the high-priority, near term needs of EPA Region 8. The STAR program funds research grants and graduate fellowships in numerous science and engineering disciplines. The Small Business Innovative Research (SBIR) program provides opportunities for small businesses to respond to longer term needs of the Agency .

   During the past year, Region 8's Science Liaison developed a partnership with ORD's Small Business Innovative Research (SBIR) program by incorporating the priority science needs of the Region's programs with those in ORD. This effort lead to the creation of special solicitation topics for SBIR. These topics included: coal bed methane, chronic wasting disease, concentrated animal feeding operations, mining and non-road engines, all of which are critical issues in Region 8. The Regional Science Liaison coordinated the Region's involvement in a small business workshop held in Golden, Colorado and the relevancy review of the project proposals. The Regional Science Liaison will continue to track progress of these projects and will host an environmental research seminar in which STAR grantees can share research results with regional staff, states and tribes.

   Our goal for FY04 is to more thoroughly evaluate all ORD grants to assess the status and outcomes. Our objectives includes ensuring the effective transfer of the knowledge gained from research, grants, fellowships and partnerships in the science area in order to extend the science benefits broadly. We will follow up to ensure that our Region 8 customers receive the information derived from the Agency's research and development efforts. Through workshops and other

communications, we will improve our customers' knowledge, understanding and use of the results obtained from Agency funded research. We will also identify new opportunities for our customers, including states, tribes, the public, academic institutions and students to directly participate in our research work.

<u>Region 8 Lab</u>

The EPA Region 8 lab provides valuable support to regional programs in areas of analytical chemistry, microbiology, macroinvertebrate analysis, biological toxicity testing, laboratory audits and field data collection. The lab supports multiple program areas all across the Region. This past year the lab has increased in sample analysis work load by 400 percent. Additionally, new capabilities for toxicity testing and macroinvertebrate sampling and analysis have begun to be utilized by the Region. In 2003, lab services were opened up to state programs who needed support they could not afford due to budget constraints.

Over the next few years, the lab will be faced with the challenges of prioritizing work for the regional office and maintaining high quality work while improving productivity and efficiency. Operational efficiencies will continually be explored for cost savings. A regional planning effort for laboratory services will be held in 2004 to more clearly define the lab's role and specific needs of the programs. A Region-wide field support team will be formed which will leverage the laboratory's strengths in field sampling and data collection.

Homeland security and the development of a regional lab network will continue to receive emphasis in future years to prepare for lab support during catastrophic events. Critical capability gaps will be identified and raised to management in Region 8 and Headquarters. On-going discussions and visits with state and private labs will continue to build stronger working relationships and to identify ways to support each other during emergencies.

Environmental Management System

EPA Region 8 began development of an environmental management system (EMS) for our regional office, regional laboratory and Montana office in October, 2001, with the formation of an EMS team and selection of two members of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) as "EMS Champions." The team developed the Region's Guiding Principles and adopted the ISO 14001 Standard as the framework for the EMS. The team also implemented most of the steps of the planning phase of EMS development.

In September, 2003, management decided that a full-time EMS Leader should be detailed to guide and coach the Region, and work on implementation, corrective action, EMS review, top management review and external self-declaration phases of the EMS. The EMS Leader will be working with the team, regional staff, contractors and management to finalize our facility EMS and then look at next steps based on our environmental work.

Success will be measured by the following: internal and external EPA decisions that consider and minimize environmental impacts, full compliance with all EMS and ISO 14001 standard requirements, and an external stakeholder process that allows for changes based on feedback.

Homeland Security

Programmatic prevention and readiness activities are described throughout Section 2 of this plan. Some of these activities and programs include the Region's Core Emergency Response program, Area Contingency Plans and the Regional Incident Coordination Team, all of which aim to integrate prevention, preparedness and response activities to minimize risks from accidental or intentional releases. In addition, we devote considerable time to maintaining and testing our continuity of operations plan (COOP). In the event of an incident interrupting normal operations, the COOP is designed to reestablish critical services in an orderly and timely manner. The plan is a broad outline of the critical steps to be taken and would be applied dependent on the appropriate response to a specific incident.

During 2003, Region 8 tested our "call down" employee notification process multiple times and also completed two COOP relocation drills. These drills involved different emergency scenarios in which senior managers determined that a relocation to our alternate COOP site was necessary and then tested our ability to operate from the alternate site. Critical personnel were deployed to the alternate site to perform their functions under the different scenarios. Observers provided feedback on ways to improve our COOP. We will continue these unannounced drills on a regular basis, as well as provide annual refresher training to COOP team members.

In addition, we have over one hundred volunteers for the Region 8 response support corps, and plan training and exercises so that key staffing can understand and implement their responsibilities. These ongoing actions are necessary in order to maintain skills and readiness for any situation that may arise.